

White Ox - Summary
Pamela Susan Hawkins

“White Ox Films, Inc. [was] a non-profit film organization based in Rochester, New York. Its purpose [was] to harness the untapped potential of the film and television media by developing new conceptual, technical and practical systems in the field of cinema technology, aesthetics and communications. [Their] primary purpose ...[was] the use of such systems... to create films that [were] positive, healing and uplifting. ...[They hoped] to give an overview of the ways in which we feel film and TV can be used to further the evolution of mankind by providing deeper more total communications, particularly in the realm of art.”

“It [was the purpose of White Ox to develop and make public whatever technology and knowledge is needed to place these media completely in the hands of the public.”

David Tulbert came to Rochester following graduate studies in film and digital arts at the Center for Advanced Studies at M.I.T. to study Zen. He founded and directed White Ox Films which incorporated in 1972. They “began by putting on an exhibition series of fine feature films and experimental shorts. The project was a joint effort with the local art gallery which had enough of a budget to pick up any deficit the project might incur.” New York State Council on the Arts, under Film/TV department director Peter Bradley, provided funds for two White Ox projects: "Film Farm, an intensive eight week summer workshop for gifted high school students; and Summer Dreams, a series of outdoor films that were selected to stimulate feelings of brotherhood and joy in the audience... The Rochester Highland Bowl of Rochester, where the films were screened, is a large outdoor natural amphitheatre located in a park.... Thousands attended the films and the students in Film Farm got a very fine, creatively oriented film course.”

Following these two small start up projects White Ox was unsuccessfully in acquiring other NYSCA educational grants until 1974/1975 when they received a grant for the establishment of a resource center, Cinemedia Resource Center. The project got underway in July of 1975 and with additional funds numerous programs were put in place, “all aimed at helping independent filmmakers and at educating novices to become more proficient as filmmakers.”

- They offered the "free loan of a full gamut of Super-8 and 16mm production equipment, including double system sync sound in both guages, and [they had] the most complete post-production facility in upstate New York.
- They conducted technical workshops that trained people in how to use equipment to make films, and Film Art seminars which, through intensive analysis of short experimental and other works, show[ed] filmmakers how to use the basic equipment and techniques at their disposal to make their films more aesthetically sound.”
- Visiting artists. In 1977 Peter Kubelka, Richard Myers, Martha Coolidge
- “Cinemedia Newsletter”, a bi-monthly publication with contributors such as Frank Konesky, Scott MacDonald and Betty Tulbert
- regional contest

Many of there programs were partially funded not only by NYSCA but also the National Endowment for the Arts.

White Ox began to “form a Film Circle in every county within [their] 27-county service region.. to distribute service easily and thoroughly across the whole 27-county.” The hope was to “organize and create communications between filmmakers and film groups in the region.” At White Ox, largely under the auspices of the Cinemedia project, [they] put together a team of 11 volunteer engineers and computer

people to study the problem of what kind of technology equipment should be developed for access and production. They responded that a computer tool, which runs, that does not run you, would provide the most versatility, decrease production time and make for new image manipulation experiments. In 1976 Talbert summed up his position as, "The solution to the public access problem, and to your problems as an independent, lies not only in more funds but in better production equipment to keep pace with the rapid technological expansion taking place in the distribution technologies."(1)

Profile of White Ox 1978

- Equipment access to Super 8mm, and 16mm film. Loans were without charge except for Moviola editing system. Had 3 editing rooms and sound mixing room, as well as sound stage.
- Workshops
- Visiting Artist Program
- Museum Screenings co-sponsored with Memorial Art Gallery
- Summer Dreams, weekly classics with outdoor screenings
- Cinemedia Newsletter, quarterly with technical information, reviews and reports

Other staff included

Thomas Bisky, Director (1975)

Skip Battaglia, Associate Director

Jon Herrick, Director of Film Presentations (1973)

Martin Noel (1978)

1. David Tulbert, "White Ox Films: Funding the Future," *The Independent Gazette*, July 1976, pg. 21-23.